BLAZBLUE
MATERIAL COLLECTION

MURAKUMO
Type-BLUE

BLAZBLUE MATERIAL COLLECTION

ブレイブルー設定資料集

BLAZBLUE
CALAMITY TRIGGER

BLAZBLUE MATERIAL COLLECTION

ブレイブルー 設定資料集

BLAZBLUE
CALAMITY TRIGGER

Translated by zephyr07 & Suzaku
EPUB by Nephery

Cover

Illustrations

Ragna Short Story:
"Memory of Blue"

Jin Short Story:
"purgatory hell"

Noel Short Story:
"THE BLUE"

Rachel Short Story:
"Endless Waltz"

Litchi Short Story:
"Borderline"

Arakune Short Story:
"The Diary"

Taokaka Short Story:
"Capricious Us"

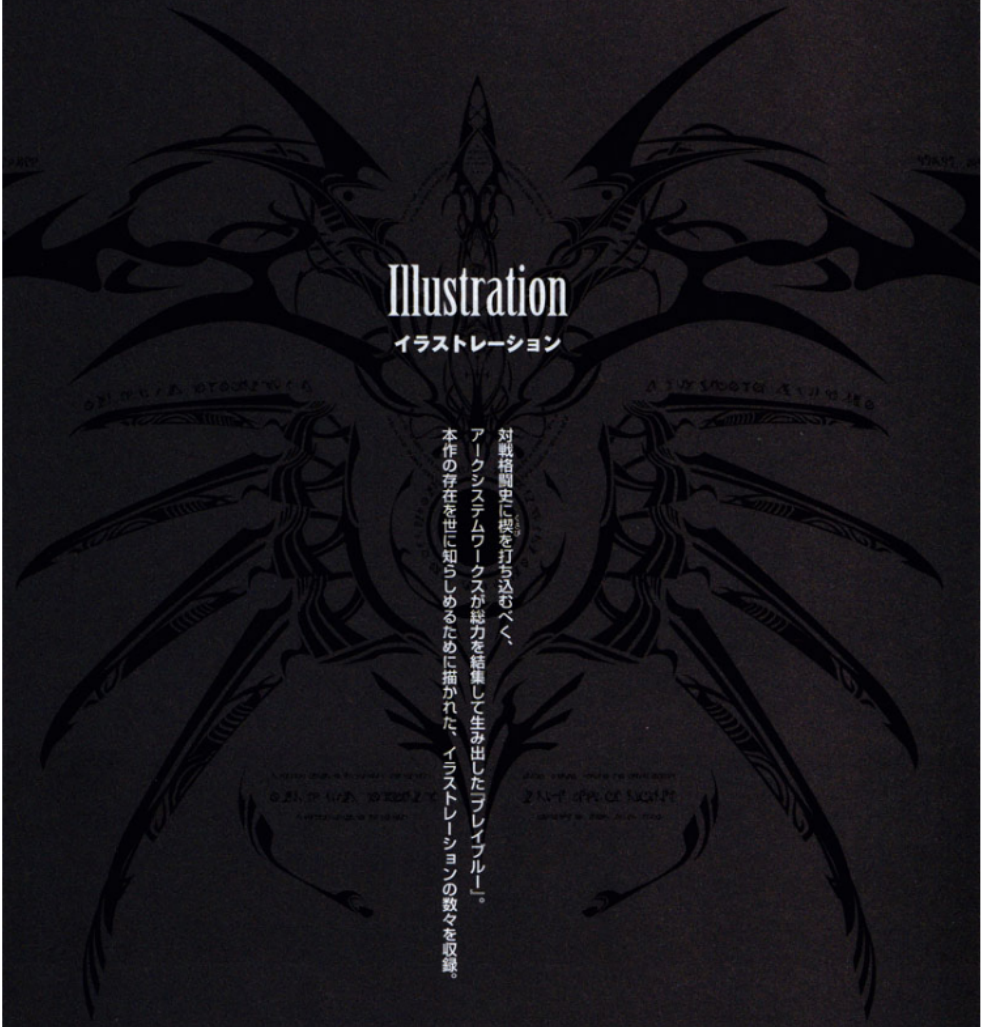
Bang Short Story:
"Fortune favours the bold"

Tager Short Story:
"Trust You"

Carl Short Story:
"Puppeteers"

Hakumen Short Story:
"Innocent Black"

Nu Short Story:
"an evil sign"



Illustration

イラストレーション

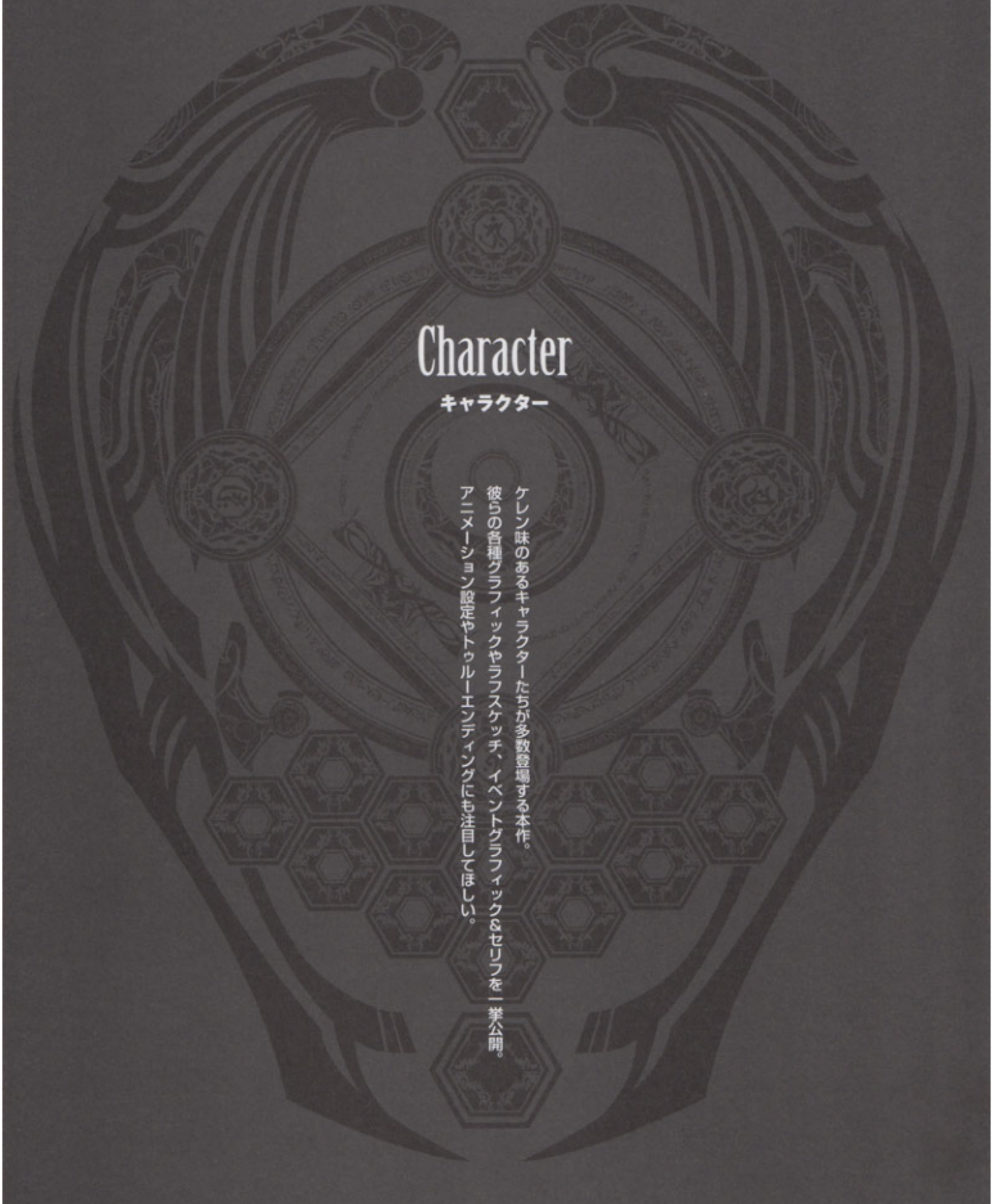
対戦格闘史に楔を打ち込むべく、
アークシステムワークスが総力を結集して生み出した「ブレイブルー」。
本作の存在を世に知らしめるために描かれた、イラストレーションの数々を収録。

BLAZBLUE
CALAMITY TRIGGER

BLAZBLUE

P
PANPAN

れいちぇる



Character

キャラクター

ケレン味のあるキャラクターたちが多数登場する本作。彼らの各種グラフィックやラフスケッチ、イベントグラフィック＆セリフを一挙公開。アニメーション設定やトゥルーエンディングにも注目してほしい。

MEMORY OF BLUE

RAGNA

The 9th Hierarchical City "Akitsu" was an extremely unremarkable city lacking any especially noteworthy features. A few days earlier, Ragna the Bloodedge had showed up in town. And on this day, he was waiting for midnight, when everyone would be fast asleep, to make his move. Ragna's objective was the largest building in the city—the NOL branch. Fleet-footed and free from prying eyes, he tore through the night down Main Street, and before long caught sight of a massive building that soon dominated his field of vision. Ornately decorated, it was far more impressive than the bureaucratic public offices. He briefly paused before the Library's vaunted "dignity and perfection personified". Glaring up at the building, Ragna angrily clicked his tongue.

"The area up ahead is restricted. Turn back immediately."

The masculine voice boomed through a speaker installed on a streetlight. The front gate was still a hundred meters away. When a man carrying a "huge weapon" appeared out of the night and began to approach him, there was no mistaking it for anything other than a warning…

Ragna ignored that warning, and without batting an eyelash, kept right on walking.

"Halt! Come any closer and you'll be considered an intruder, subject to removal by force!"

Taking on a stronger tone, the voice again called out from the speaker. In spite of this, Ragna's pace remained the same.

"You there, sir! Can you hear me? I said halt!!"

The masculine voice became an angered roar. A moment later, a trap was triggered, emitting a dull and persistent noise throughout the vicinity. This trap, designed for protection against demonic beasts, could instantly vaporize an ordinary man. The safeguard, however, was powerless against Ragna. With a casual wave of his right hand, the trap dispersed like a burst bubble. The voices of confused guards danced around him, followed by the piercing echo of an alarm.

The main gate was right in front of him—but there, Ragna came to a sudden stop. The praetorian guard had heard the commotion and alarms, and in less than a minute, dozens of armed personnel had assembled. Identical blue uniforms lined up in a row. With a flash, Ragna's mouth twisted into a fearless grin.

"So you want it the hard way... Library dogs!"

He gripped the great sword worn across his lower back and settled into a battle stance. It was a stance that gave him the appearance of a poised gunslinger. The armed personnel responded in kind by targeting Ragna and training their weapons on him.

Suddenly, a dreadful flash and thunderous roar ripped through the area, blowing away the gate and taking the armed personnel with it. Raising an eyebrow, Ragna stepped over the wreckage of the main gate, leisurely infiltrating the NOL building's interior.

Advancing straight up a ramp, he reached the staircase connected to the main hall. There, more than a hundred armed personnel fully prepared for war already awaited him.

Ragna slowly surveyed the faces of the armed personnel. Taking a deep breath, he sliced into the crowd of enemies without hesitation.

It was like someone painting a landscape of hell. With his eyes flaring bright, Ragna brandished his massive blade. An armagus erupted through the building in all directions. Swords rang out. Chaotic screams, shouting, and the agony of death. Making no distinction between men, women, or those trying to escape, he cut every last one of them down. There would be no mercy from Ragna. He no longer recognized his foes as "human". Garbed in those unsightly "blue uniforms", they were the "Azure" which he hated.

The battle gradually took on the aspect of a one-sided slaughter…

Several minutes after the furious conflict—or rather, the massacre—Ragna was in the deepest part of the NOL building.

Each NOL branch conceals an unimaginable, bowl-shaped room underground. Gold and blue lights traced mysterious geometric patterns, boasting a majestic beauty. He jumped into the depths, sliding down toward the "Gate".

"... It's all right, the sequence hasn't finished, yet."

Turning away from the Gate, he sprinted up the interior of the room and easily leapt back to the ledge. He then looked down toward the bottom again.

He raised his right hand just like before, and it became enveloped in a blue-black light, which gradually increased in size. With an abrupt and forceful thrust, Ragna launched the blue-black light forward. In the next instant, the Gate was blown into pieces with a resounding crash. The impact sent out a ripple of shockwaves from the center of the Gate. With the parts falling away one at a time, the miniature garden collapsed.

The NOL branch, which was said to have enough military power to rival an entire country, was destroyed at the hands of just a single person on that night.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Ragna walked down a dim, narrow alley. He was making his way towards the fifth of five gates found in the 9th Hierarchical City. Of the five gates, it was the smallest, and was also located the furthest from downtown. It was commonly called the "back door", and was frequently used by traveling visitors for that reason. He was through with this city. Having achieved his goal, Ragna just wanted to get out of the city as soon as possible.

As he neared the gate, he left the alley and entered another long, slender passage. The labyrinthine streets appeared to repeat over and over again, a result of unplanned growth in the district.

It must have been a much lower level—and the scarcity of streetlights made it even darker. The seithr levels were out of balance as well, and it seemed there was a problem with the air-conditioning. The damp air clung to Ragna's body. He gnashed his teeth at the gap between this and the upper district of the NOL branch.

At the same time, Ragna suddenly felt a gaze fall upon him and stopped walking. He squinted, peering into the darkness.

There, on the roof of a building, stood a maiden in black. She looked like a black rabbit holding a black umbrella in a black void. The rabbit was sitting on something like a big, rubber ball, watching Ragna. Her backlit expression was unclear—the only clear thing about her were the two cold, crimson eyes floating in the darkness. Ragna returned the young girl's glare with contempt, his own eyes tinged with a shade of bloodlust. With her eyes still trained on Ragna, the girl raised an eyebrow. She continued to stare at him through those red eyes, like a pair of glass beads, without blinking.

Annoying. Black and annoying. Ragna finally averted his eyes from her and started walking again, ignoring her completely. Then the young lady, who had surely been standing on the roof mere moments earlier, appeared right before his eyes. Ragna, unsurprised, brushed right past her.

As he passed, her porcelain doll lips moved.

"My... How uncouth."

Ragna's steps stopped, his expression shaded with anger. The girl watched Ragna patiently, returning his look without hesitation. The tension between the two could have been cut with a knife. It seemed as if the moment stretched on for a terribly long time, then ended with a graceful gesture from the young lady.

Abruptly, she had raised her right hand and moved it horizontally. Pointing to the northwest, the black rabbit—with a firm tone—whispered, "Kagutsuchi." Ragna couldn't make out the intent behind the young lady's words, and stared at her once again, with a dubious expression.

In the next instant, the girl was floating, drifting up into the sky. Just before the rabbit's silhouette against the moon faded away like fog, she looked down at Ragna and whispered something.

"Fufufu… I shall look forward to it."

Ragna lightly clicked his tongue. The girl's voice continued to echo in his mind for a long time.

Ragna's right arm had grown hot… The air, heavy with humidity, seeped into his lungs as the back of his heel passed through the gate. Shortly after, he became known as the "Grim Reaper".

PURGATORY HELL

JIN

Flipping through the pages, Jin let out a sigh. Field officers and higher ranks were given an official office in the main branch of the Libarium. In a short while, the organisation was set to publish a new book entitled “Biographies of Heroes”. It covered heroes both past and present from the Libarium, as well as exploits of these heroes compiled into an omnibus format and written in an autobiographical style. As Jin was one of the top heroes still alive in the present age, not only did his face adorned the front cover, but a fair amount of the book was devoted to his introduction and exploits.

The one that was in his hands was just a manuscript. “The person himself should confirm all the facts” was a duty Jin was ordered to do, which was why he was even bothering to skim through the book.

“Ridiculous…”

There was nothing to confirm—— The introduction chronicled his life from the day he was adopted into the Kisaragi household, and the climax covered his activities during the Ikaruga Civil War. However, there were a lot of portions that differed from the reality as it had happened, and several parts were heavily dramatised. If everything was written the way it had really happened, then a lot of the book would have to be cut.

As he was about to sign off “No Problem” on the manuscript's first page, there was a knock on the office door.

“... Come in.”

It was a command given without even raising his head from his desk. With an “Excuse me”, the door opened. A young female officer respectfully bowed and entered. Jin's posture remained unchanged, his vision still focused on the book on top of his desk, and he spoke.

“... What do you want?”

“ —— 2nd Lieutenant Noel Vermillion reporting. It's been a long time, Major.”

“... Noel... Vermillion?”

A name he had heard before. Jin knew this girl. It wasn't the first time they had met. During his time at the military academy, they had numerous conversations before.

—— Why is this girl suddenly back at my side? She's pissing me off…!!

Jin hated this girl's face. To the point where just imagining it would fill him with disgust. Noel stepped forward and presented something to Jin. Jin stretched out for it with only his hand—— it appeared to be a letter. He examined the letter, then broke the seal.

He grew dizzy. From it's contents he thought that it might be the higher ups all ganging up on him with this unknown scheme. It said Noel Vermillion was “to be appointed as a special solo soldier tasked mainly with intelligence and assasination, to be place under direct supervision of a division commander.”

—— Why?

It wasn't as if she had come from a special family line. If you looked at her grades they weren't excellent. The only thing that could be considered for special mention was her remarkably high armagus aptitude scores. She had little experience, and possesed insufficient knowledge. Jin went through the various information and details in his head, trying to mesh his speculations into coherent thought. However, no matter how hard he thought about it he couldn't recall any special reason for this girl to be appointed as his direct subordinate.

Once again, he grew dizzy. Just what kind of torture was this… He gritted his inner teeth.

—— This woman is the same.

At that point Jin raised his head for the first time. Her cheeks stiffened, a nervous look upon her face as she stood there. The Libarium's orders were absolute. Even a hero like Jin could ill-afford to go against them without severe consequences. This moment was another example of him always being unable to go against the Libarium's implicit laws, and it annoyed him immensely.

“… Congratulations on your new appointment, Lieutenant Vermillion. Further instructions will be issued to you in another room. Look for the person in charge. That is all; you're dismissed.”

Drowning the girl under all the instructions given in one shot, Jin hurriedly chased the newly appointed female officer out of his office.

“Damn it…”

Once he had confirmed that the girl had left his office, Jin let out an irritable sigh, and slammed his fists on his desk.

“Why… Of all things… That girl is…!!”

His irritation grew. As he exhaled and calmed down, Jin noticed an unusual feeling and turned around. Placed on a sword rack was the ice sword Yukianesa, and some kind of weird air seemed to be seeping out of it.

“… Bastard. What do you want to say?”

Jin directed his query at the sword of ice. However, there was no response.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

The next day, the Libarium's main branch was in ahuge uproar. Recently, a certain individual had been breaking in, destroying, and killing the personel in succesive Libarium branches in Hierachical cities. Reports that last night, a person thought to be the same criminal with the same M.O had destroyed the entire branch of the 9th Hierachical City, had filtered into the main branch.

As an aftermath of that incident, on that day Jin was swamped in paperwork coming in from all the other branches, and by the time he managed to finish up all the documents, it had already become dark outside. As he finished up the last of his paperwork and was contemplating putting down his pen, there was a knock on his door and at the same time a girl's voice could be heard.

“Excuse me Major. 2nd Lieutenant Noel Vermillion reporting.”

Ignoring her wasn't possible, so faced with no alternative Jin responded.

“… Enter.”

The massive doors slowly opened. Jin's vision remained firmly on his desk's surface. He paid no attention to Noel and resumed his work, until she handed him a letter.

“… What is it?”

With a suspicious expression Jin took the letter. Noel's hard expression remained unchanged. The letter had been sealed with a high level armagus. A level S-class code—— which meant a highly classified document. Only division commanders and higher ranks had the nessescary cipher and the the aptitude to use such high level armagus. Without both the letter could not be opened.

Noel took a step back and stood rigidly at attention. Although he wanted to tell her to leave if she was done, it was likely that the main branch had issued other orders to her. Furthermore the fact that she had specially hand delivered this letter to him probably meant that there was some further mission concerning her in it. Jin irritatedly glanced up from reading the letter, his eyes resting on Yukianesa, which was resting on the sword rack. Just like before, it was showing some kind of reaction. Bit by bit it seemed Yukianesa was transmitting some sort of pulse.

—— Is it this girl?

He glanced at Noel for an instant, but it seemed she wasn't paying any attention and was looking elsewhere. Jin began to chant the armagus code to decrypt the letter. The invisible letters appeared in quick succesion. Jin skimmed through the text.

—— The Grim Reaper again?!

Somehow the letter's contents were mainly about the rumored “Grim Reaper”. He had heard of a solitary person's criminal behaviour, but to think that such an individual could destroy several Libarium branches…

“—— In accordance, Noel Vermillion is to head to the 13th Hierachical City “Kagutsuchi” to investigate into the matter of the “Grim Reaper”. Also, detailed information of the “Grim Reaper” will be announced to the public, and the vigilantes will be informed accordingly. In addition, the name of the “Grim Reaper” is “Ragna the Bloodedge” ——“

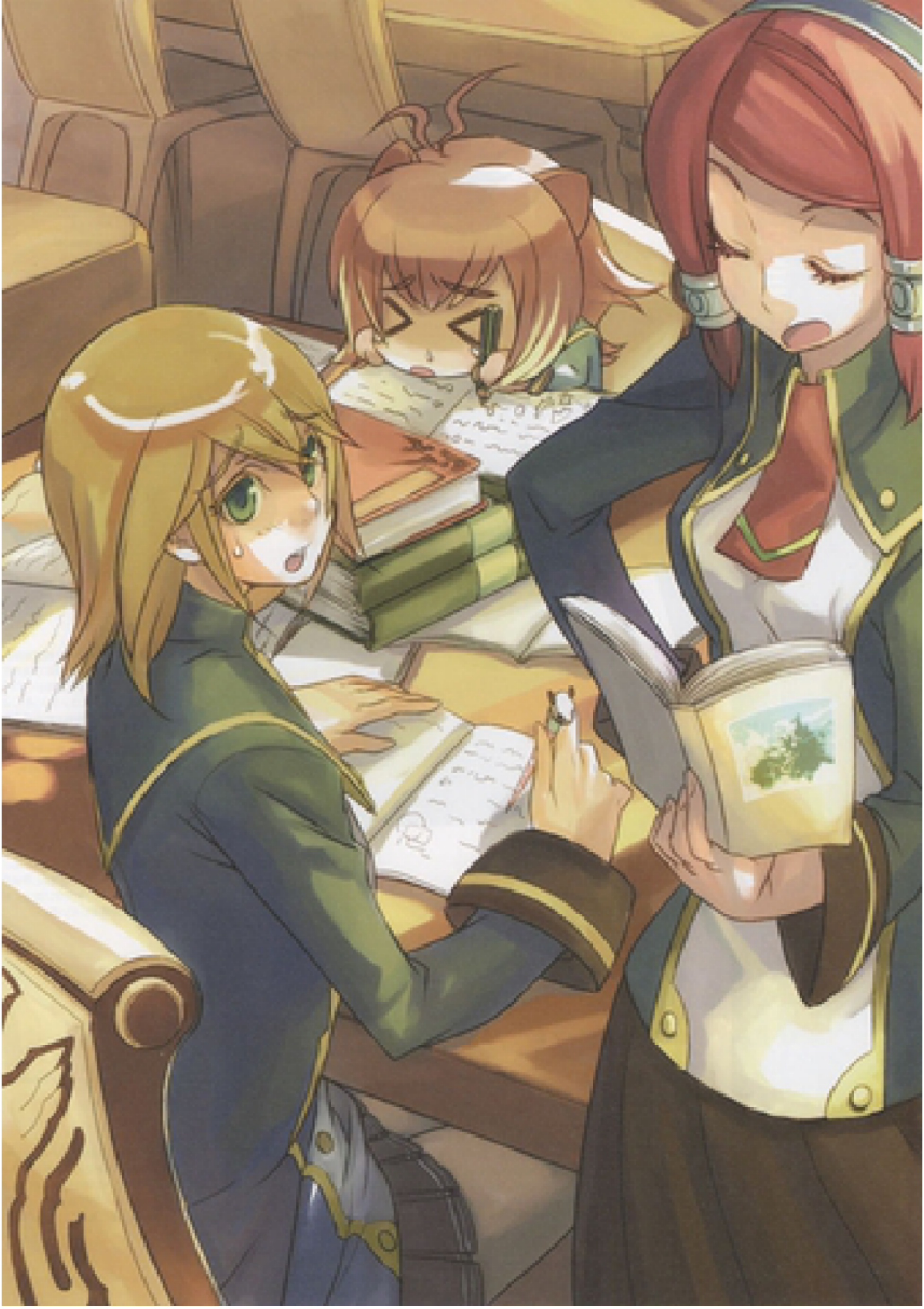
“—— Ragna”

The words flowed naturally out of his mouth. In that instant, with a loud and flashy bang the scenery that Jin was seeing suddenly warped and distorted. When the broken pieces finally patched themselves together, the scenery was a totally different colour. Something from deep within him started to stir, as if in a hurry to be let out.

“ Ragna——”

Once more, he spat out the name. He couldn't be stopped. It was repeated over and over again. As if a bind had been loosened, blood rushed throughout his body properly for the first time, to him it was a great feeling.

—— Why, how could I have forgotten it till now. This, this rush of emotion!



Noel Vermillion. That became the girl's new name.

The girl that was a war orphan was adopted by Edgar Vermillion and his wife Clair into their family, and at the same time, that name was given to her.

The Vermillion household were nobility of some renown which, for many generations, had produced many distinguished knights who served in the Librarium. However, due to a weak constituion the current head Edgar was unable to join the military campaigns; in addition, they did not have any children to succeed the family line. Also, because they weren't afraid to openly criticise and protest against the Librarium (even though they were nobility), the Vermillion household was frowned upon by the Librarium and the other nobles, had their aristocratic privileges reduced, and their family line was ostracised.

While surviving on their dwindling family fortune their ancestors had amassed, the ruined family carried on with their lives and adopted Noel. In a tiny cottage in a backwater area with shallow sethir levels, Noel grew up showered with love from her adoptive parents. They were moderately happy, and the days passed by as such.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

A few years after her adoption, Noel came to know about the impending termination of the Vermilion household's aristocratic privileges.

The Vermilion house banished from the Librarium, and loss of their aristocratic privileges —— If that happened, that would mean even day to day life would soon become difficult. Worried about the future, Noel decided to become a knight in the Librarium, and so decided to take the entrance exams for the Military Academy.

“Dad, Mum. I, I want to become a knight in the Librarium.”

Noel suddenly dropped the bombshell while looking straight into her parent's shocked eyes.

“Noel…”

The knights of Librarium, as their names implied, were soldiers under the Librarium. Naturally, as a soldier, one was expected to devote their entire being to the service of the Librarium. If Noel became a knight then her family's privileges would be restored, and they would once again enjoy the patronage of the Librarium. Noel knew all that. Even though her parents protested against her decision, Noel's resolve remained firm.

The result of their discussion was that Noel was not to enlist as a combatant but to do office work —— which could be said as their final compromise.

Thus, Noel took the entrance examination for entry into the Military Academy. But, because she was entering halfway, she had to deal with another test. An test which placed priority of Ars Magus aptitude over knowledge, you could call it the real barrier within the barrier that stood in her way of enlistment.

However, not only did Noel's aptitude levels exceed far beyond the required standards, it was also the highest level ever recorded in history. For the 2nd time in recent years, the previous record was once again smashed by the current one. Noel easily passed her exams—— in addition, she was specially invited into the Military Academy.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

6 months before Noel was due to graduate from the Academy, an incident happened. The school was abuzz with a certain topic.

“Did ya hear did ya hear!? Kisaragi-senpai, he went and did something cool!”

The one who noisily rushed into the classroom after school was none other than Noel's roommate, the half squirrel beast-kin Makoto.

“Please calm down Makoto. What happened to Jin?”

Also Noel's roommate, hailing from 1 of the Duodecim's families, Tsubaki Yayoi chided her friend while calmly replying.

“After evaluating his actions during the Ikaruga civil war, he's been promoted by 2 grades!”

While waving a newspaper that had the words “Extra!” printed on it in large font, Makoto excitedly continued to blab on. The newspaper caption read “1st Lieutenant Jin Kisaragi, has been promoted to become the youngest Major in recorded history. He also has been appointed as the division commander of the 4th Thaumaturgical Division”

“ A double promotion… Besides those who were killed in the line of duty, has that ever happened before?”

“Somehow, since he was only there for 2 days, I think a single promotion would have fitted more-”

As soon as she recalled that name that was already fading from her mind, Noel remember her deeply emotive feelings.

1st Lieutenant Jin Kisaragi… wrong, Major. A graduate of the Academy, a a student senior to Noel and company. Serving in the student council she had faced him numerous times, and had spoken with him before. Perfect in every way and quiet… no, that wasn't right, his frosty image made him a difficult senior to deal with. Noel absent-mindedly stared at the large photo of Jin published in the newspaper that was lying on top of the desk.

“Jin Kisaragi…”

While saying his name, the image that Noel only saw once in her entire time in school; the image of Jin with a lunatic expression on his face, flashed across her mind, and Noel caught her breath.

“What's wrong? Your breathing seems ragged… Are you that happy for Jin's accomplishments?”

“N-no, that's not it…”

“You really shouldn't joke about this kind of thing… so, you are really feeling ok?”

With a worried face, Tsubaki looked over at Noel who had denied not feeling well with a weak voice.

“Ah, yes. I'm fine.”

Noel did her best to smile as she replied.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

That person arrived exactly on time. A solidly built old man dressed in a blue uniform.

“Ms Noel Vermillion?”

“Yes.”

Her nervousness increased.

“I am from the Personnel Department of the main branch. My purpose today is to inform you about the orders regarding your transfer. Do you understand?”

“… Yes."

“Very well. These are the instructions given from the Librarium to you. Cadet Noel Vermillion. We at the Novis Orbis Librarium hold your potential in extremely high esteem. We hope to appoint you to an official posting. In exchange the Vermillion family will have it's rights restored and you will be guaranteed your posting permanently."

Noel's eyes widened. Resisting the urge to ask him to repeat himself, Noel scrutinised his expression.

His face remained unchanged. The Librarium being interested in a lowly cadet to this extent was unheard of.

“Um… That is… What would I have to do… if I accepted?”

“Firstly, you'll have to take and clear an exam, then you'll be entered into the 4th Thaumaturgical Division. Following that you'll be assigned to Jin Kisaragi as a special solo combatist under his direct supervision, and you'll be observing his actions as our “link” to him”

—— Why me?

Put simply, a “special solo combatist” was a spy and an assassin. Officially she would be under Major Kisaragi to do paperwork, in other words she would become his ministral secretary... Noel bit her lip. In her mind Jin's image flashed before her.

(Kisaragi-senpai's direct subordinate...)

Cold sweat trickled down her cheek. It was true that her Armagus aptitude scores were the highest ever recorded in history. However, she thought that couldn't be all. If you talked about results then Tsubaki was head and shoulders above her, and in terms of battle ability there were plenty of more outstanding people. Noel thought about it long and hard.

In the midst of her indecision, she finally came to 1 acceptable conclusion. Put simply, even though “her level of potential” and “her level of results” weren't exactly very high, to the Librarium, she was just usuable in her own way, and simply another “disposable when convenient person”…

Futhermore the Librarium had caught on that “Noel's weakness” was her family, and were taking advantage of this fact

However, even with those conditions, if she were to accept——

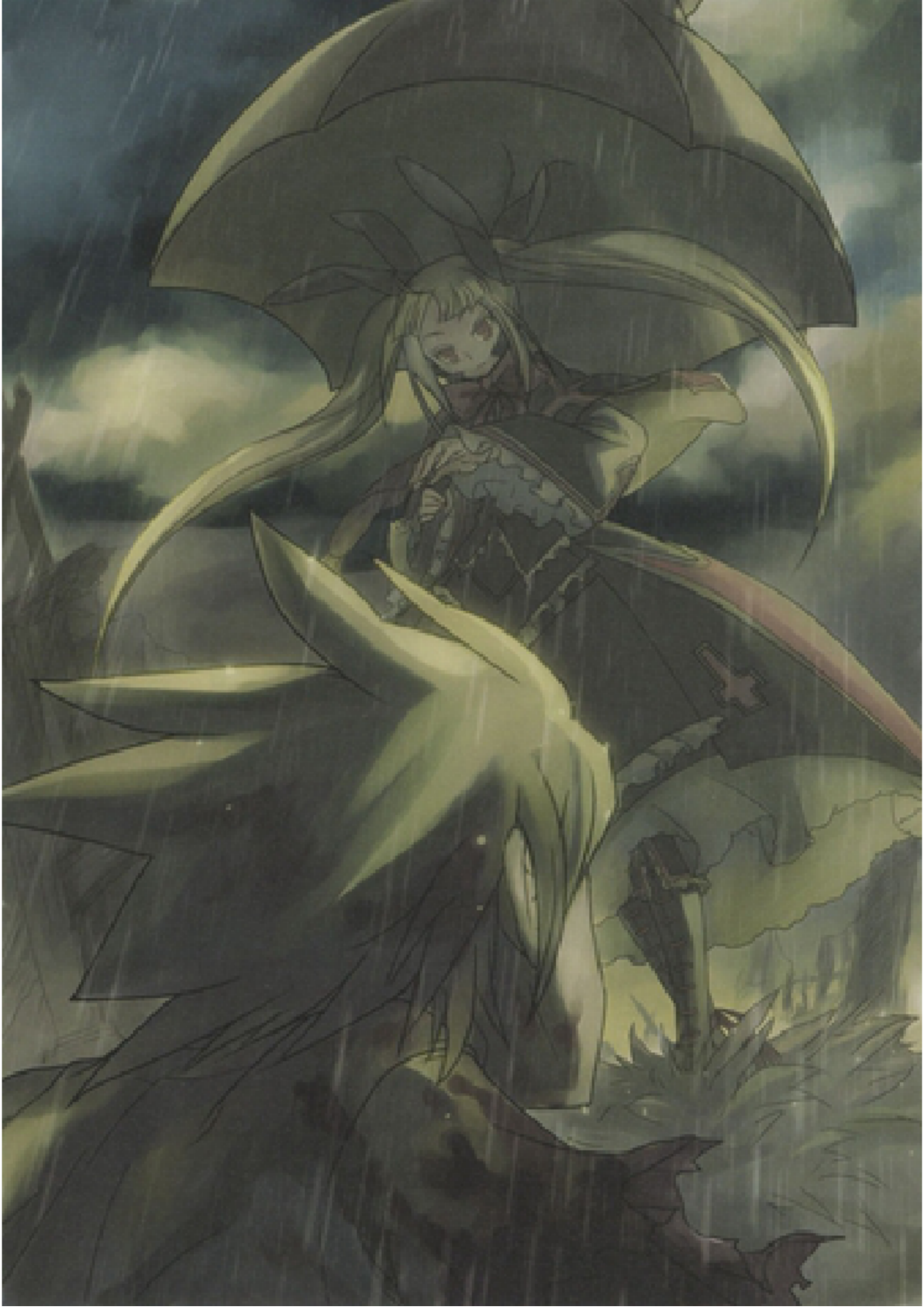
With a frail cough her father discussing their loss of special rights and her mother encouraging him. And also the image of her only looking from shadows without being able to do anything. That scene ran through her mind.

—— I humbly accept the posting.

I intentionally gave my answer respectfully. That's right, the me now should be able to endure it. I should kill off my heart. That is what I was taught being a Librarium knight means.

ENDLESS WALTZ

RACHEL



The sound of the teacup being placed onto the saucer echoed throughout the garden blanketed with red roses.

The sky had long since set, and it was the hour which the stars illuminated the night with their cold fire. At her side an old butler with a long beard stood in silent repose. Furthermore at his side a bat and a large black cat were huddled together, snoozing away with light and easy breaths.

Rachel's teatime. Ever the same.

Skin as white as snow. Beautiful blonde hair. Red pupils. Rachel Alucard was a girl in possesion of a doll-like beauty.

The girl usually dressed in black. As a foil to her white skin, this created a superb contrast, which only further enhanced the elegance of the girl. At a glance, the girl resembled nothing more than the young daughter of a noble family, however in reality she was a vampire who had already lived for several hundred years. The enormous castle built upon the vast grounds belonged to the

Alucard household, a noted family amongst the vampire race. The girl was the current head of the household.

Even though she was called the head of the household, the actual occupants of the castle other than Rachel were her butler Valkenhayn, the bat Gii, and the black cat Nago. These 4 people (?) were the only ones left.

Moistening her mouth with the warm black tea, with one breath she looked up at the sky inlaid with stars. Rachel waited in still silence. For their first meeting. That was a day in the life of Rachel. A day in the life of a girl who experienced endless rewindings of time.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

“We're going.”

The leisurely sleeping Nago and Gii were rudely aroused from their slumber by a shoe kicking them awake. Jumping up in shock, their unhappy protests were duely ignored by Rachel. She then pinched and slapped them for good measure. The 2 creatures yelped out loud, and hurridly began to prepare for departure.

Ignoring the flurry of activity from the 2 creatures, Rachel looked over at her butler Valkenhayn, who appeared to be holding something in. After looking into Rachel's eyes and reading what was in there, after a few moments passed, Valkenhayn quietly said a very short “Take care milady”.

Elegantly settling herself down with ease, she tidied up her attire, and started to exude a strong sense of awareness and control over the shadows flowing withing the shadows. Rachel mumbled something softly, and her figure slowly slipped into the darkness. Valkenhayn wordlessly bowed, as his lady—— Rachel, he silently sent off.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

The first thing noticable after stepping out of the darkness was that needle-like raining was falling. Before the eye a grusome scene stretched out for miles. What was once a church surrounded by lush woods and beautiful flowers had crumbled beyond any vestige of recognition, the surrounding area was burnt down to the ground, as if the arsonist was not only satisfied with mere kidnapping.

In the forefront of that scenery, there was a lone youth in front on the destroyed church. Cradling his right arm in his lap, his voice all but spent, he was yelling something as if his life depended on it.

“How shameful.”

Rachel noiselessly drew close to the youth's side, saying so as he looked down upon the squatting youth.

The surprised youth looked up with a stunned expression on his face. With eyes like jade he scowled at Rachel.

Rachel's expression remained unchanged as she stared at the youth for a little while, then turned her gaze to the ruins of the church.

As if surveying the place, Rachel looked over the church and it's surrounding regions, then elegantly raised her left hand to her chest level. Her fingers resembling white fish, she traced several circles in the air, and gently opened her palm. As soon as she did that, a drop of transparent light fell from her hand and spilt onto the ground. The instant the drop hit the ground, from what could be termed as the core of that place, blue light begin to form in the outline of a cross.

In a blink of an eye the blue light suddenly traced itself out into a magic square. Once it was done it hard to say if the magic square looked like some sort of family crest or not, but ground began to collapse as if a whole region had just fallen out of the ground.

The youth glanced over and saw that something imcomprehensible had awoken. However, without having even enough time to scream, he was swallowed into the hole.

Before long things finally started to calm down. Occasionally, the cracking of rocks as they tumbled down into the hole could be heard

Rachel teleported to the bottom in a flash, the youth was lying flat on the ground like a cotton cloth drenched with water. Rachel stared at his unmoving figure from the shadows.

Presently, the youth who was thought to be dead struggled to get up, as if his body were as heavy as lead. Using his left arm to support his body, he called out in a feeble voice. Fresh blood flew out from his mouth.

The youth once again fell down onto his back. Ragged breaths and desperate yells issued from his mouth. It was easy to see he wasn't long for this world.

“How unexpectedly sloppy of you…”

Rachel spoke. It seemed the youth finally managed to turn his head towards Rachel, she narrowly coming into sight. Without tears nor vitality, it seemed he realised that there was only one possible outcome. As if looking for the entrance to death itself, his eyes scanned the surroundings rapidly.

“Would you like some assistance? If so, then I'll help you stop the bleeding by drinking your blood alright?”

Saying this caused an expression of dismay to rise in the back of her mind, and her cheeks flushed red.

And then once again, she looked down silently at the youth.

Some amount of time passed, and it seemed the rain had finally stopped. The majority of the sky was still covered in clouds, amidst the gaps some rays of light managed to poke through.

One of the rays lighted up the youth's vacant eyes. His right eye, which was beautiful like transparent jade, was now red as if stained by blood.

“If you don't wish to die, then stand before me.”

Suddenly, the youth broke eye contact. It seemed he had spotted something. With his last bit of strength he walked over to the wall as if his life depended on it. Gritting his teeth, he supported his body on his remainding arm.

After finally reaching the wall, with only the right eye which had been dyed red, the youth began scrutinisng the wall for something.

The burnt wall exposed a most unusual object. It was a jet black rock which looked like some sort of obsidian without any lustre.

It was shaped in the fashion of a human. However, everything above it's neck was missing. To this strange rock that had a weird shape, without any trace of hesitation, the youth walked over as if drawn to it by some unknown force. And then, he touched the rock with his bloodied left arm.

In that instant, the rock begin to rumble like the beat of a drum. What seemed like sand began to crumble from the rock, followed by a jet black mist spewing out of the rock with fierce vigour. In an instant the black mist turned into some form of darkness, and swallowed the youth whole.

Watching up to that point with her own eyes, Rachel turned to depart.

“Princess, shouldn't we watch all the way to the end?”

The black cat Nago, with a worried expression his face, asked. However, Rachel didn't reply.

“Yes, yes that's right! Princess! Isn't he someone very import- gyaa!!”

Meeting Gii's outburst with silence and a beating, Rachel shook her head slighty and muttered.

“… What an irony.”

He was always seeing himself as a “Grim Reaper”.

Rachel sat down on Nago and closed her eyes. And then they all vanished into the darkness.

Shortly after, the darkness was dispelled. In it's place stood the figure of the youth. He took several deep breaths. The youth's body which had lost it's right arm was now whole once again, the right arm back where it should be.

However, that blackness that was the right arm —— it was the same as the strange rock. That form it took—— the arm of Hades borne of blood, that was what it was.

BORDERLINE

LITCHI

I thought my nervous words wouldn't make a difference. Up till then and from then on…

However, that was a mistake, at that time I first became aware of that.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

AD 2193

Even after being guided to the entrance, I still ended up lost, and finally manage to arrive at that place. A silver plate was set into the thick metal door. The name 'Dr. KOKONOE' was unmistakably inscribed on it. At first I knocked on the door timidly, but there was no response from within. I tried knocking harder, but there was still no answer. Finally making up my mind I pushed the wide doors open.

“… Excuse me”

The door slid open with a light rattle. Peeking inside, despite it being daytime, the lab was gloomy and dim.

“… I'm sorry, is anyone here?”

I raised my voice a little. However, there was no reply. Or rather, I couldn't feel any presence from within the room.

“Oh dear, this is a problem…”

Today, my purpose for visiting was for my formal introduction. Should I wait outside for a little while?— while other thoughts floated around in my head, I stood still in front of the door.

“Hm? Who are you?”

Suddenly, a voice called out. I turned to face the voice's owner. A tall and slender man stood there looking at me.

“Excuse me, I came to meet with Dr Kokonoe but it seems she isn't in.”

“Huh, the professor's not in?”

“… Yes. I was supposed to come in today for my introduction but…”

While explaining, I looked at the man's eyes. Set upon a handsome face, it was full of intelligence and his pupils seemed to be drawing you in.

“Um, is there something on my face?”

“Ah, eh, no!”

Looking at my flustered denial, he let out a small laugh. Such a carefree smile. Why was I becoming nervous? I could feel my cheeks were blushing red.

“Are you a contractor?”

“Eh!? Ah, no… I'm supposed to start working here from today onwards. My name is Litchi Faye Ling.”

“Ah, so you're the one!”

“… Do you know about me?”

“I've heard a lot from the professor. I'm Dr Kokonoe's apprentice. I work in the lab next door.”

While saying so, he pointed over at the adjacent room.

“Ah, is that so. Well then, from now on please instruct me well. I'm in your care.”

“Ah no, I'm in your care too.”

That's was rather awkward of me, I thought. And also, that was our very first meeting.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

And so I came to work as Dr Kokonoe's lab assistant. He was a researcher specialising in alchemy, and he was also a first-class alchemist. I who lacked knowledge in that field, learnt various things from him about “the study of creating something from nothing”. And in exchange, he learnt from my strong points, the fields of oriental medicine and traditional chinese herbology. We exchanged knowledge on our specialised fields, and worked to better each other. Since we were both around the same age, it didn't take long for our friendship to quickly deepen.

◆ ◆ ◆

Just as I was thinking those days would pass like so, that day came. I was startled by a sudden loud voice.

“Do you still not get it, you stupid apprentice!”

“No! The one who's wrong is you!”

By this time, I had a slight sense that Dr Kokonoe and him didn't have a really stable working relationship. It was always about the subject of their research— or rather, the attitude a scientist should adopt, and their differences on opinions. However, up till now their discussion had always been calm. Now the both of them had raised voices and were throwing insults at each other.

As I watched their hostility to each other I became flustered, and grew nervous. Their cursing grew even more fierce, and it looked like their argument was going to end up in a violent scuffle. Normally, at this point Tager would step in, but unfortunately he was currently out on a mission. I made up my mind, and with fireworks coming out of eyes I cut in between the two of them.

“Both of you, calm down this instant!”

“… Tch.”

With a snort Dr Kokonoe grudgingly turned the other way.

“You too, calm down. This isn't like you!”

I turned to admonish him. Whereupon—

“Not like me? Not like me you said?!”

“… Eh?”

My words seemed to have struck a nerve, and he raised his voice again to continue ranting.

“Then, let me ask you. What is the me that you know?”

“Th, that's…”

For a moment I was perplexed, and was at a loss for words. His character that I thought I knew— the calm and gentle him— that wasn't his real face?

I asked myself this question, but I couldn't find the answer.

“You only know one side of me. The ordinary, mature, quiet and intelligent person. Was that the image you were holding on to?”

“…”

I hung my head, unable to reply.

“ That's right, we only know the one side of things. All creation has a front side and a back side, the light and the shadow. The parts we're able to perceive, is only a fraction of the entire phenomenon. However, listen to me Litchi. I will, I will… I swear, all the phenomenons in this world, I will find the road that leads to the truth behind them!”

The sight of his figure continually rambling on excitedly overwhelmed me. This wasn't the him I'd known up till now. Again, the subject he was talking about seemed extraordinary… I couldn't hide my unease, and couldn't bring myself to look at his face.

“Look at me Litchi… I… will absolutely open the fountain of all knowledge without fail for you to see.”

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

After his argument with the professor, he and I drifted apart. A few months passed, and soon we were only nodding at each other politely in the corridors. However, even then I could see that he was becoming worn out. At that point, I went into his lab to check up on him— was what I was always thinking of doing.

Just like that, many months went by. He began to become absent from work more and more. Perhaps his health had deteriorated, for several weeks I hadn't seen his figure at his lab. For someone who took his work seriously this was very unusual. After asking around, it seemed he had ceased to exist altogether. On that day, I decided to pay a visit to his house.

His house was on a street where most of the middle class people lived. It was the top story of an apartment building. I pressed the buzzer several times but there was no response. With an uneasy feeling I knocked on the door. It wasn't locked. Weighing up the situation at hand, I quietly entered the apartment.

The smell of mould assaulted my nose. It looked like no one had cleaned this place for quite a while, and as far as the eye could see dust had piled up in all places. The room was in disorder, and all around the room there were countless piles of books stacked up, in total chaos. I called his name but there was no response. It seemed that he wasn't here. I apologised in my heart, and started searching the room.

— and then, I found “that”.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Where did he go? What is doing now?

Why did I notice it sooner?

Why didn't I try to help him?

Within me all the doubts repeated themselves in a refrain

Regret and guilt tormented me

“If I don't find him soon then…”

In the middle of the darkness, I alone—muttered to myself.

AD 2197

THE DIARY

ARAKUNE

DAY 1

I've started a brand new journal. Anything that's new is always a good thing. Since I'm not the kind that's methodical, as this journal progresses the entries might get sloppier and sloppier. Today they started discussing a new particle that could completely destroy sethir without requirng sethir itself. I'm not entirely sure who brought it up but they started to discuss that, even though it was obvious they were just going around in circles. Being surrounded by their rock-like faces, and having to seat in that room's uncomfortable chairs was so annoying. After I told her this she started laughing. I didn't really think it was that funny, but I hadn't laughed in a while so I laughed along with her.

DAY 2

Today she strangely came to wake me up. I'm not a morning person so at first it was pretty annoying, but she grabbed my hand and dragged me into the E5 lab. When I asked her what had happened in here, she pointed to a one of the cases and the kid inside had… well. She being so transparent makes her personality easy to understand. She hasn't been discriminatory about the going ons here so far, but I think she took that one to heart. Me and her both understood there was nothing more we could do. I did my best to comfort her, but she still seemed desolate. I think I prefer working.

DAY 5

I'm not in a good mood today. I'll spit it out completely in here. In every way we are unable to comprehend one another, that woman and I. Honestly speaking I don't hate that woman as a person. I'm not sure if calling that woman a person is a good thing or not.

There's a part of me that's indebted to her, also it's not as if I can't understand what she's saying, and for some reason or another I understand her viewpoint and way of thinking. The only thing is... perhaps I should say there's this part of me which is definitely unable to get along with her. Somehow that woman has too much common sense for her own good. You could say she's very smart. You could also say she comes from a good lineage. However, it doesn't mean that she's excessively obstinate about what she does. In that way that a person is born with nothing, and has to gain knowledge while pruning off the bad stuff, with the idea of practicality in mind other people's ideas are rejected. How tiresome.

(There a portion that has traces of it being erased off.)

DAY 6

Recently no matter how much I sleep I still still feel tired. Besides fatigue I also feel anxious. Sometimes I even find myself forgetting what am I doing here. I think I really need to pull myself together or everything will be in vain.

DAY 13

I've managed to get a little free time for myself. As far as possible I'd like to write daily. Because I've been busy and also that woman is being a pain in the ass, I've gotten a lot more unhappy. At those times, she would always tell me to not give up and encourage me. I'd really like to thank her but, I wonder why she does it… Somehow or another i think it's because she's working directly under that woman and she's doing pretty well. However to get depressed would be bad. Everytime that happens I always feel like I'm just a regular person, no, even if that is so, I wish to think I'm not just that. So I'm going to work my socks off . That's how I'm different from that woman.

DAY 14

I caught a cold. She came to visit and helped me out with various tasks.

DAY 32

I made a discovery. It's was a dramatic one and I lost track of time because I was too immersed into it. I've already summarized the general outline into a report, but I'll just briefly scribble the points here as well. Currently even though it's true nature and form has yet to be determined, many people still are able to use sethir, however the old school of thought that sethir is just a form of magic converted from life force is wrong. Sethir actually is ____________ In other words our current research into armagus is equivalent to

_______, which means it's the same as that thing. Yes, which is why that woman who refuses to use armagus doesn't understand. Don't tell me she's deliberately refusing to assess the idea that __________ (The entry is cut off midway rather unnaturally.)

DAY 35

Why do they not understand, why doesn't that woman understand? As I've already said, this is a discovery that was lurking in the blind spot of our research.

When it's the genius talking, and because a lot was said that today I feel it deeply. I definitely feel it. Firstly, only taking a light glance at it, then rejecting it as if some kind of dirt had touched it. Have you seriously stopped to think about it? It's possible. So why deny that possibility exists? If you have an answer within you then prove it to me. Something has to be done about that strange person. I've alwats felt that that woman is a strange one. Even if due to the deparment's spike in ability she may be a genius but that is different. In spite of being called a god that woman is useless. That woman is useless.

DAY 42

Today I threw myself into work only. She read my paper seriously, but she didn't even give a nod. Is it not that woman but me who's become strange? Those old scholars also treat me like some strange person more and more. If those people are really saying that they should have spoken the truth to me right? Have I been mistaken all this time? Even though there is evidence here.

(The evidence mentioned, appears to be something written over 10 pages starting from this page, however what exactly it's trying to point out is unknown.)

DAY 43

It's alright, I still haven't disappeared yet. It se ms t ey haven't noticed the extensive swelling. It would be disastrous if it were to show on the surface so that's a relief. The transformed pattern is automatically not rejecting the suppresion. That is_________

DA_ 4_

Why can't I use it, even though I'm so close to the truth. Although I'm close, if I use that I don't know if I'll be able to escape. Even though I'm unable to do it, why don't you understand? Go through the pipe, someday the directive for going through the pipe will come. Stop hammering, it's noisy, how many years have passed since then, I can escape it, then that's useless, those damned idiots, wrong, I am. Someday we'll go down, godowngodowngodown and draw patterns of the depth's interval ________________________

Noisynoisynoisy

Stop getting in my way!

DAY 51

Today I composed my thoughts once more. Today I had a little doubt about the design of the patterns so I omitted several vital parts in the previous entries. Right now humanity is flowing like blood, I'll explain now. It's become like this. Firstly about anti-sethir, it's the same phenomenon as the phenomenon of the ars armagus phenomenon. To compensate for this ___ definitely the dangerous Azure which no one has noticed I'd do it once, eventually I want to skillfully, skillfully, do it. I'll have to discreetly do _________ thing ___ and that ______ was unexpected. Different from armagus. Different from those library vermin's armagus. The huge Azure and azure's ______ bursts open, and the relief that forms quickly grows big, definitely rarely big so you cannot not notice it. Drawing near is dangerous, so first I have to extract that from the rear. It's directly close to the spine.If I rush there I'll die, that's for certain. After I extract the Azure ______ I'd really like to do that. I'll certainly have finally reached. I explained it with all my heart and soul, but no one is listening? to me it seems. So then I should just gently delete everyone. Gentlygentlygently___________

ge t y

CAPRICIOUS US

TAOKAKA

The weather today in the Kaka Clan's village located beneath the 13th Hierarchical City “Kagutsuchi” was pitch black as always.

The figure of mister sun couldn't be seen, and the neighbourhood was damp and humid. This situation had been going on for tens of years.

The village people— wrong, the village cats were gathered around the cat-god statue in the middle of the plaza, arguing amongst themselves. A large pot had been installed there, and since it was used for cooking the fire under it was constantly lit, so it was very warm, making it an ideal spot to catch an afternoon nap. In any case, the situation of the sun playing hide-and-seek with the Kaka Clan was a serious problem indeed.

So then, in first place why was the sun's figure unable to be seen? The cause was a giant plate placed over the ceiling of the village.

Long ago the Kaka clan's ancestors, under the leadership of someone known as the“cat person”, found this comfortable and cozy area, migrated here, and constructed the village. At the foot of the mountain the Kaka clan began their unique civilisation.

However those peaceful days didn't last long. One day, humans abruptly appeared and in a blink of an eye they converted the entire mountain body into a Hierarchical City. By the time the Kaka village had noticed it, the plate from the upper level had covered their ceiling, and their village had changed into a dark place where the sunlight couldn't reach anymore. Once that happened, the village cats finally started to realise the seriousness if the situation, and began to chatter amongst themselves. However, it was already too late, and nothing could be done about their current situation. The lamentable end result was that they thought since it was still under construction everything was still alright… still alright… while taking their afternoon nap.

Furthermore recently another danger had appeared. The existence of the “squiggly”. One day, this black squiggly monster had suddenly come to their village. At first the village cats approached it interestedly with wagging tails going “What is that?”, but soon the unnatural aura they sensed from the “squiggly” made their fur stand on end. Responding to their hostility— the previously apathetic “squiggly” morphed into an unnatural shape and started to attack the Kaka clan. The ever free spirited Kaka banded together as one, combing their power to stand against the “squiggly”, and barely managed to succeed in driving it away.

However, afterwards the “squiggly” would still appear in the village from time to time. It attacked several number of kittens, even eating some of them. This was unacceptable— the devouring of victims had to be stopped… was what the cats were worrying about, as much as a cat can worry.

And then, the village cats finally reached a conclusion. In the first place, the reason why the “squiggly” appeared was the “absence of mister sun”.

That the village was dark and damp was why that monster appeared. Furthermore, now that mister sun was gone they had started fighting over all the remainding nice napping spots. Not one good thing had happened.

At the end of the worrying they decided to open a “cat conference”. All the cats gathered in the plaza, and formed a circle around the elder.

“Eh—, ahem. Right then, the first ever cat conference is now in session.”

The elder coughed loudly. The other cats reverently waited for her next words with meek faces.

“As everyone knows, currently our village has lost the favour of the sun.”

“I see meow—“ “It's so dark meow—” “That's terrible meow—” “I'm hungry meow—“ “I wanna go take a nap meow—“

“Silence!”

Dead silence.

“And on top of that, as of late the black “squiggly” thing has been attacking our village.”

“I see meow—“ “That's scary meow—” “That's terrible meow—” “I'm hungry meow—“ “I wanna go take a nap meow—“

“Silence!”

Dead silence.

“In any case, does anyone have any constructive ideas on improving our current situation?”

Dead silence.

The Kaka clan's village cats were always like that. Sighing, the elder randomly pointed at one of the cats and asked for it's opinion.

“The human village upstairs is in the way I think.”

“That's true meow. If that were to disappear then mister sun would come back I think”

“Hm… So then, what do you think we should do to get rid of the human village?”

“If we had 'money” then everything would be convenient”

“Marn-knee?”

“M-o-n-e-y?… Money?”

The first tangible idea brought up generated a buzz of discussion around the surrounding cats.

“I've heard that if you have a huuuuge amount of it you can do anything meow.”

The elder nodded in agreement.

“And where is this money located?”

“I don't know that, but I think it's probably in the humans' village meow—”

“I see, ok then.”

The elder nodded even more vigourously.

“Thanks to everyone's efforts, we've managed to come up with some useful information. First is that the humans' village has to be gone. To that end this money thing will probably go a long way to solving it. However, this money is likely to be in the village itself. Which means someone will have to travel and infiltrate the village…”

The elder surveyed the cats. They had started to push the responsibility to each other with words like “You do it.” “What are you saying? You do it.” “No way it's such a hassle.”. The conference dragged on. Those who slept halfway, those who secretly ate catnip all wanted to avoid the harsh punishment that would come later, so each cat tried their best to shrug off the responsibility, trying to bring the conference to an end. The place grew noisy.

However, with one cat's sentence, the atmosphere changed completely.

“Come to think of it, there's someone who's not here participating in the conference meow!”

“Who is it?” “Who meow?”

… They chattered on. The cats looked at one another in the face. All of them had gathered here for this very important (pain in the ass) conference, so who was the cat that had played truant…?

◆ ◆ ◆

Here lay a female Kaka deep in peaceful slumber. Knowing nothing of cat conferences and the like, Taokaka curled up in a corner of the village, indulging in her nap.

Always disrupting the group mentality and all but ostracised from the village. After all the cats had finished their investigation, Taokaka dragged her tail and other parts to the centre of the plaza, stopping in front of the cat-god statue.

The elder's paw on her head seemed to be saying “not you again”. However Taokaka didn't seemed to be concerned, and scratched her head with her hind leg, before starting to play with the insects that had gathered by the fire.

“Taokaka, do you like to take walks?”

“Yup meow”

The elder laughed and continued.

“Since you like walks so much I have a job for you…”

“No way meow.”

“What…?!”

With a “It sounds like a drag” Taokaka started to turn.

“Hm. If you were to perform this extremely simple task then I was going to give you a year's supply of top-class catnip but…”

“I'll do it meow! You should have said so earlier meow.”

Thus, the job that was actually supposed to be dignified and solemn, went to Taokaka, who undertook the task of visiting the humans' town. Just maybe, if Taokaka performed her mission admirably, the Kaka village could take back their sun…?

FORTUNE FAVOURS THE BOLD

JBANG

AD 2110. Thanks to the efforts of the 6 warriors the Black Beast is destroyed, and the war that spanned a hundred years or so between humanity and the Black Beast is finally put to an end.

The people started to call the 6 warriors as “The 6 Heroes”. However, humanity's joy was short-lived. The war which had dragged on for so long, had caused the world's population to drop to half it's original number, and various important cities around the world were destroyed. The damage the conflict caused was enormous. On top of that, from within the body of the fallen Black Beast a jet-black mist— later termed as sethir— gushed out, and covered the entire planet's surface.

Humanity's war with the Black Beast would become known as the “First War of Magic”. Amongst the 6 Heroes the genius sorceress Nine would combine her “sorcery” with the crystalisation of humanity's intellect, “science”, to form a new technology known as “armagus”. Books with details on how to use this “armagus” would become known as “grimoires”, naturally, humanity began to amass large quantities of said books. Most of these grimoires were controlled by the “ Void Space Information Management Bureau”

AD 2111. The Void Space Information Management Bureau which controls most of the “grimoires” increases it's influence, and establishes an organization for governing the whole world. It also changes it's name from “Void Space Information Management Bureau” To “Novis Orbis Librarium”, and gathered it's elite soldiers— later called Knights— and organised them into an armed fighting corps known as the “1st Thaumaturgical Division”. Their influence grew more and more. Placing the revival of the human race as an urgent agenda, the “Novis Orbis Librarium”—shortened as the Librarium, stepped forward to lead humanity.

AD 2112. About a year after construction began, the project deemed as the cornerstone of the restoration of humanity, the 1st integrated city “Izanagi” is completed. After the Black Beast was defeated the “sethir” it poured forth had covered the entire world's surface. The deterimental effects of excessive intake of sethir by humans as well as it's effect on the ecosystem was established.To escape the sethir on the planet's surface humanity moved into the hills and cut out cities to live in.

After that, the restoration steadily proceeded on, and construction of hundreds of mountain cities of various sizes proceeded till the later half of AD 2100. In the midst of those 23 multi-storied cities were designed and constructed, which would be known as “Hierachical Cities”, and the Librarium developed each respective city to be the centre of that particular region. In order to consolidate those 23 citites, the Librarium established the “Unified World Organisation”. With that announcement the Librarium governed the world both in name and in reality.

AD 2190. The 5th Hierachical City “Ibukido” withdraws from the “Unified World Organisation”, effectively announcing it's independence from the Librarium.

The following year 4 other cities follow the lead of “Ibukido”— the 6th Hierachical City “Yabiko”, the 7th Hierachical City “Kazamotsu”, the 8th Hierachical City “Wadatsumi”, and the 9th Hierachical City “Akitsu” and announce their seccession from the Librarium. From this point on the group of the 5 Hierachical Cities would be named as the “Ikaruga Federation”. The Librarium immediately brand the “Ikaruga Federation” as rebels and begins military suppression. However, the Ikaruga Federation's unity and military strength proves stronger than anticipated, and the duration of the war increases.

AD 2192. With the absorption of several smaller cities, the Ikaruga Federation's influence and teritory both increase. In response, the Librarium criticises the Ikaruga Federation's aggresive behaviour, and asserts that it has legitimacy and is the just side in the war. The conflict continues.

AD 2194. The key city of the Ikaruga Federation “Ibukido” mysteriously vanishes. Rumour is that the Librarium used some sort of orbital satellite weapon to attack, but until now the reason for it's disappearance has never been disclosed. With the loss of it's key city the Ikaruga Federation slowly begins to collapse, on top of that, their unity begins to waver. Their headquarters shifting from place to place, the resistance movement continues.

AD 2196. Having lost 4 Hierachical Cities, the Ikaruga Federation attempts to negotiate a peace treaty with the Librarium. However, the Librarium rejects the offer, and the Ikaruga Federation retreats to their last stronghold “Wadatsumi”, determined to resist to the bitter end.

AD 2197. The siege of Ikaruga which was expected to be a prolonged one unxpectedly ends abruptly.

A young Knight of the Librarium, Jin Kisaragi, infiltrates the castle alone and performs a lightning-fast strike— raiding the keep, he assasinates the supreme commander and ruler Tenjou. With the loss of their leader, the Ikaruga Federation finally crumbles.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

In the lower half of the 13th Hierachical City “Kagutsuchi”, in the district which would later come to be known as “Ronin-gai”, the men were having a friendly chat. It was the early afternoon. The men had finished their morning's work, and were now stuffing themselves with their wives' homemade rice balls, catching a breather.

Approximately half a month had passed since the fall of Ikaruga. The survivors of the siege of Ikaruga, in their search for a place to start their lives anew, ended up in the lower half of the 13th Hierachical City. Unlike the strictly controlled uper half of the Hierachical City, the hand of the Librarium did not reach the lower areas, naturally making it a new haven for them. To the Ikaruga survivors, this became their new home. They built houses, grew crops, and had all the raw materials and goods nessecary for daily life.

“Alright, that should do it.”

The large male who was silently writing— his name was Shihigami Bang— raised his head. The finest ninja of Ikaruga respected and adored by his fellow countrymen, and once feared by all his enemies. Currently he was leading the former residents of Ikaruga in his dead master Tenjou's stead.

“Boss. What were you doing just now?”

Seeing the figure of the chief quietly writing something wasn't something normal, so one of his subordinates inquired with a puzzled look on his face.

“Mm. The truth is like this. I was writing a history textbook.”

“A history… textbook?”

It was an unexpected answer. His subordinate's voices were raised with incredulity.

“That's right. To redress those Library scum's wrong doings, and to clear up my master's regrets, that is my mission. So for that sake first we have to leave behind for the future generations a record of all the Library's transgressions.”

Hmmm, thought his subordinates as they

listened intently to their boss's words with fire in their hearts.

“When I was young our master taught me all about the world and it's history. From what I can recall of them, I'm writing down these opening words right here.”

I see, thought this subordinates as they nodded vigourously with sparkling eyes.

“Even so I still can't remember all the small details.”

“The master's words, some portions I definitely recall without question. Such as that this 55-sun (about 165 cm, or 5.4 feet) nail will break, that I definitely cannot forget.”

“As expected of our boss. However, I don't think this 55-sun nail will break so easily nor that soon.”

“Mm. This a memento from our dead lord. It shouldn't be expected to break.”

That wasn't what he meant. He wanted to tell his subordinates that the “large iron nail” wasn't going to break physically, but he couldn't get the words out of his mouth. He had to handle his subordinates carefully with his hot-headnesses.

Bang slowly stood up, his fists clenched.

“Today we might only number in the hundreds, but the men sweat and toil, and the women weave at the looms and give birth. If we keep doing that, then soon we will number in the thousands, and ten thousands. This is the unyielding spirit of the Ikaruga people!”

“Yes sir!”

“Well then, it's about time to get back to work!”

“Yes sir!”

At their boss's signal, the men rose as one, and returned to their respective tasks. While Bang stared at their backs as he sent them off, he hefted a piece of timber, and wiped the sweat that had started flowing.

TRUST YOU

TAGER

Where is this place?

The man's consciousness returned. His vision was blurry. He blinked several times, before his sight finally came into focus, and a woman in a white coat stood before his eyes.

“It looks like you finally opened your eyes. How're you feeling?”

The man didn't answer. No, he couldn't answer. It was as if his head was filled with lead, his senses still dull and heavy. His consciousness was hazy, and he felt like his entire body was stuck to the floor by some sort of magnetic force. Only his eyes could move slightly, as he tried to recognise what was by his side. There were various apparatuses and liquids which he didn't know their uses for, samples from creatures, as well as books and sheafs of papers piled up in a corner. Somehow, it looked like he was in a lab.

“I'm Kokonoe. A scientist from Sector Seven”

Just like that, the woman named Kokonoe introduced herself briefly. Only being able to move his eyes, the man observed Kokonoe.

It was a unhealthy and ill-humored face that looked like all the lack of sleep in the world had been crammed into it, the man thought. Clad casually in a shabby white coat, small glasses lying apologetically on top of a small nose. I see, her appearance makes it hard for me to disagree with her statement that she's a scientist, the man thought. There was something in her mouth. He thought it was a toothpick or a cigarette, but it turned out to be a stick of candy.

“... Tager“

“... what?”

“It's your name.”

“My... name...?”

The man mumbled while staring at the cold and robotic light that illuminated the room. Tager... Was that really a name? He tried to remember his own name but gave up after a while. His memories were still cloudy, and he couldn't compose his thoughts properly.

“So my name is Tager?”

“Yeah. I just decided on it.”

The man named Tager was at a loss for words at Kokonoe's casual remark. He waited for her next remark. However, it didn't look like Kokonoe was going to open her mouth. Occasionally she moved the stick of candy in her mouth.

Some time passed in mutual silence, and in that time his consciousness cleared up.

“I'm sorry but, I don't understand the entire situation. Can you explain?”

“Let's see… Well, originally it seems you were the captain of some investigative unit. And then, you got caught up in some battle somewhere and you died.”

As if to signify the explanation was over, the stick of candy— it looked like a catnip lollipop— rolled around in her mouth again.

Investigative unit… Captain… Battle… The blurry images in his head cleared a little, and he felt he could grasp his situation a little better.

“ What is this feeling…?”

“You shouldn't try to recall so much. Otherwise you'll get errors in your engine.”

“ Did you say… engine…?”

At the moment, he experienced a pain that felt like something was clamping around his head. For a moment, towards the end of the pain his view was covered by was he thought looked like spinning lights.

“Am I… dead?”

“See for yourself. Don't you think you're splendidly alive?”

While saying all that, Kokonoe twisted one of her long strands of hairs around her finger.

“You, did you help me?”

“You can call me Kokonoe.”

“Kokonoe… You said you were a scientist…”

She was more like a doctor. Although even if she was a scientist or a doctor, he thought she looked more like a young girl.

Kokonoe stood up. Hands thrusted into her pockets, she walked up briskly to Tager's side.

“If left alone you'd probably have died. I thought it'd be such a waste, so that's why...”

At that moment, Tager noticed it for the first time. From the girl's back a tail forked into 2 was waving about. Although she had hid most of the fur on top of her head, on top of that sat a pair of tiny, chubby cat-like ears.

“ A beastkin...?”

As if saying it is as you see, Kokonoe ignored him and begin casually extracting codes installed into Tager's body.

“... how is it, can you move?”

Tager moved his modified body. His body, which up until now he had lacked total control over, surprisingly moved smoothly. He took a light breath, and exerted his upper body. He easily pulled himself upright.

“What the heck is this…?!”

“I picked it up from the scrapheap where my colleagues dump things they deem “beyond help”. I thought that I might be able to save this one.”

Kokonoe picked up a test tube placed to one side, and a rare expression of happiness surfaced.

“… And that?”

“Recently, unique cells were discovered in the oriental region. Put simply, they posess the ability to stimulate the functions of living creatures. However, because their effect is too strong, injecting them into a normal human is tantamount to killing them.”

Disturbing words were rapidly coming out of Kokonoe's mouth.

“ Despite that, you turned out to be a splendid match. Incidentally the damaged tissue which couldn't be healed with this I replaced with cyborg parts. In simple words, you were revived as a cybernetic organism.”

It was true… looking at his image reflected in the glass, Tager understood. His muscles had been bulked up immensely. His enormous body's skin was colored red. Buried in his angular face were two sharp eyes. Furthermore, his mouth contain two “fangs”, to put it politely. His appearance was as one of those “demons” from the oriental fairy tales.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

With no say in the matter Kokonoe had rescued, modified, and renamed him. With really no say in anything Tager now found himself in his current situation, furthermore he was now working with Kokonoe. Although he was said to be working with her, his job didn't consist of him by her side offering assistance. Although a member of Sector Seven's investigative team, he primarily participated in the “beastkin's” research. Kokonoe's pretext was to “return him back to his original state.”

The first mission for the newly refurbished Tager, was a “request” from Kokonoe. Upon asking for more details, it seemed that the central city of Ikaruga had disappeared not too long ago. His mission was to take advantage of the chaos, and sneak in to retrieve “a certain something”.

Carrying a large package on his back, Tager landed at the objective site and stood up. He surveyed the area with his own eyes and grew suspicious. For a place that had just been the site of a heated battle, the traces left behind were definitely odd.

“… did they just send a single person?”

From the footprints left on the ground the direction the battle took could be roughly conjectured. Most of the footprints were probably from the scared Ikarugan soldiers. Their footprints were all pointed in one direction. However those footprints suddenly vanished midway.

“Just what did they use to fight these Ikarugans?”

Looking around him, he could see that the buildings had definitely been hacked and sliced by an extremely sharp bladed object. It was almost as if this were an optical illusion wherein the buildings were made of butter. At that moment, he felt someone's stare from behind. As he turned he momentarily saw a “green shadow”like thing. He suddenly felt dizzy.

“There's some noise interfering with your thought patterns. Tager, is there a problem?”

Kokonoe opened a channel on the communications device.

“… Ah, no, it's nothing.”

Surveying his surroundings again he noticed nothing. It was probably his imagination. Right now he was in a middle of a mission. Also he was carrying something very important in his arms. He shouldn't be thinking so much unnecessary thoughts— Tager shook his head. Kokonoe also guessed something had happened, so she didn't pursue the matter any further.

“So, have you found it, “that thing” I mentioned earlier?”

“Yeah. However, the 13th is completely missing, and the 12th is empty. I've secured number 11, but since it was on the verge of being scrapped it's in terrible shape.”

“I see… I guess we were a little late then. Well it can't be helped. Even if it's just number 11 it'll be fine…”

What to do from now on— The communications device crackled and a voice could be heard.

“Well then Tager, return to base directly. I think you already know this, but that thing is a living creature. There's no dry ice. If we're going to prevent it from rotting you better get back here at top speed.”

“… Roger.”

Saying that Tager moved towards the huge crate marked “11” — it resembled a coffin— and grabbed it securely.

“TR/ 0009 Tager… Heading back now.”

PUPPETEERS

CARL

The estate was completely deserted. It was a very handsome building which was apparently built to house 20-30 people. However, from within the western-styled house there was totally no signs of human life. Sensing a weird atmosphere, the team members exchanged nervous looks with one another.

“…Doctor Relius? …Doctor Relius?”

The team leader directed his voice in the direction of the door. However, there was no response. The team members looked at each other once again, then started whispering amongst one another in subdued voices. Before long, they reached a conclusion, and and one of the group placed his hand on the doorknob. It seemed the door wasn't locked. Cautiously pushing it open, the musty and pungent smell of chemicals wafted through from inside.

“Doctor Relius Clover, we're from the Sector. If you're in here, please respond.”

The group members carefully entered one by one. The place was dark and gloomy. Dust had accumulated in every corner. Spreading out to divide the workload, they moved to search the entire estate, but they couldn't detect even a single person's presence.

“That's strange… why is there no one here? What happened to the people who were supposed to keep him under surveillance?”

Those people who had infiltrated the estate in order to keep an eye on him—— disguised as his subordinates—— there should have been 4 to 5 of them here. However, they were nowhere to be found.

“…Wh, what the hell… is this?!”

About an hour had passed since the search had started, when suddenly 1 of the group members raised his voice. The group members quickly headed towards the member who had shouted. It came from Relius's underground lab.

“What happened? Is the Doctor here?”

The member shook his head, and with his brow wrinkled deeply he pointed at the laboratory bench. Apparatus and chemicals were scattered all over the place, and on the surface it looked like the experiment was in a state of half-completion before someone was forced to abandon it. The crucial parts of the experiment subject were nowhere to be found. It was as if the entire Clover family had been spirited away entirely…

“Where did the doctor and “that thing” in his posession disappear to?

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

“Sis, you're tired are you? Is everything ok?”

The pale youth—— Carl Clover turned and gently asked his sister. Upon seeing her nod, a smile of relief broke upon Carl's face.

“That's good to hear. So from here on out… what should we do?”

“…”

Turning to his sister who had tilted her head, Carl smiled lonesomely.

“That's right, we should head to Uncle Francis's place. It's a bit far but if we walk all night we should be able to reach it. Don't worry, if it's uncle and aunt then I'm sure they'll be able to advice us on what to do next so…”

Carl's blue eyes lit up as he spoke, and with a happy expression his sister nodded deeply.

However, in reality the distance was much further than what Carl had imagined. His sister's pace was slow and cumbersome. Occasionally different people would give his sister strange looks and stare. Hiding his sister while traveling at a snail's pace was a undisputably unenjoyable trip. Eventually, 3 days after their departure, Carl and his sister finally reached their uncle's house in the dead of the night.

“Good evening, sorry for calling on you this late. Uncle Francis, it's Carl. Carl Clover.”

A haggard expression on his face, Carl knocked weakly on the brass doors with the knocker.

Shortly, the thick doors opened, and the figure of Francis in his nightgown, with lamp in hand, appeared.

On his guard against a visitor this late at first, once he realised it was Carl he hurridly opened the gate with an astonished look on his face.

“Well if it isn't Carl?! What happened, for you to come this late?”

Carl weakly shook his head.

“What exactly happened… Furthermore, you're in uniform?”

With a worried look on his face he supported Carl's shoulder with his hands.

“In any case we shouldn't just be standing here talking, come in. Did you come alone?”

Once again Carl wordlessly shook his head, and with a thin finger pointed behind him. Francis shone his lamp in the direction of Carl's finger, and was struck speechless.

“Wh, what is this?”

“… My sister.”

“… Sister?”

Francis waited for an explanation, but with a lonely expression on his face Carl stopped talking. Guessing some sort of situation had happened Francis led Carl and “Carl's sister” into the house.

Only his aunt was in the living room. Once she recognised Carl's figure she drew close.

“Aunt Rosenne…”

“Carl, just what exactly happened? At this time of the night——“

The moment she started to speak, the figure of of Carl's sister following behind him came into view and without thinking she clasped her hand over her mouth. With a frightened expression she demanded an explanation from her husband, however a complicated expression just emerged on Francis's face.

“Carl, leaving aside your abrupt visit, what is that large thing you're carrying with you?”

“She's not a thing!”

His eyebrows shaped into a “V”, Carl shouted back.

“It's my sister, Ada. Ada Clover!”

“There's no way, you must be lying.”

“Well, wait a moment Rosenne. It seems some sort of incident has happened.”

Francis rebuked the bewildered Rosenne.

“Even if you say that… This thing is somehow Ada… No matter how you look at it…”

Rosenne hesistated to finish her reply. The expression in her eyes was like she had just seen a monster.

“The only thing you can see is that it is just a mere doll——“

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

After telling them the details, the weight that he had carrying up to now started to overflow, and finally, acting like a boy his age, Carl started to sob.

“So this is… really Ada…?”

Unable to hide her surprise, Rosenne looked at the “changed sister” standing next to Carl. What Carl called his sister, in reality was a metallic doll which was at least twice little Carl's height. The Ada that the 2 of them knew, was a beautiful girl with the same blue eys and blond hair as Carl. The Ada now was a doll with a strange expressionless face. Somehow or other it seemed to have a will of it's own, could walk by itself, and could respond to questions by nodding.

“What you told us is the really the God-honest truth right?”

“Yes. That's really… my sister. And my father… I don't know his whereabouts.”

While hiccuping Carl appealed to his uncle and aunt. The 2 of them met his gaze with serious faces. If that was the truth then the worse was yet to come.

“I understand. You can stay at our place for a while.”

“Dear…”

Carl wiped his tears off with his uniform's sleeve, and mumbled a “thank you very much” in response.

“Rosenne, go prepare the bed. Carl is probably exhausted too. We'll call it a day here.”

She understood, and nodded at Carl to follow her.

“However, from today onwards you' and your sister will sleep in seperate rooms. Is that fine?”

With tears in his swollen and red eyes, Carl stared at Francis.

“I don't know whether that sister is really your sister, but there's no denying she's different now. You understand right?”

“… It'll be fine. Up till now everything's been peaceful so there shouldn't be a problem.”

Francis tried his best to persuade Carl, but he firmly refused to yield. Before long, Francis realised persuasion was useless, and patted his head saying “If anything happens tell us immediately.”

Slipping into the prepared bed, his nervousness fading like a string that's been cut, fatigue rapidly overwhelmed Carl. Within the darkness of the room, Carl turned to face his sister who was standing next to the bed.

“What a relief. It really is a huge relief, sis.”

With a dull metallic sound his sister rose, and made a gesture that resembled someone tilting their head to the side. Carl looked at that gesture, then closed his eyes and went to sleep.

The silent Ada stood there, staring straight at the sleeping boy.

INNOCENT BLACK

JAKUMEN

(written as a poem)

It was pitch black.

I'm not really sure what's going on but.

Everything that was reflected in my eyes was pitch black.

It's low . Very low. A very low and deep groan could be heard.

Like an earth tremor. Low. It's a very low sound.

Just as I noticed it the sound stopped.

My ears hurt because it's too quiet.

There really is no sound at all.

Is there really no sound at all?

Or perhaps my ears have been broken?

I don't know.

Am I standing? Am I sitting?

Or am I floating? It's hard to tell.

I want to open my eyes but my eyelids are so heavy.

Somehow or other I open them and.

What surrounds me is some kind of blue mist and I get the feeling that I'm hugging it

A light which I never felt before till now suddenly shined through.

As if I was still in the middle of some fantasic dream…

At that moment, for the first time.

——I became aware of my existence.

Am I alive?

I see. I am alive.

Are my heart and organs still there? I don't know but.

Certainly, I get the feeling that I'm alive.

However, I feel a pulse.

It's a delightful, fast pounding feeling.

It's like if

I got to see all the people I love. All the important people to me. That kind of palpitation.

Faintly.

From within myself. A voice that's not mine can be heard

It's calling out a name. It's a girl's voice.

However. I don't know it.

I stare at my hand.

The jet black hand has countless red fissures running along it.

I think to myself what is it? But I don't know.

I can only think “How did I become so black as well?”

The beautiful blue mist dissipates

And in it's place stands a white… something.

Because it looks human shaped I think it is a human

——What is a human?

The white person slowly draws close.

I observe the surroundings and I can make out 5 other shadows.

However. The surroundings are too dazzling so I'm not very sure.

In the midst of that I see a shadow that looks like a “cat”.

——What is a cat?

While I was thinking that

That white something somehow came to a halt right in front of my eyes.

The white person and his many eyes

Fixedly. Intently. They stare at me.

“How pitiful… So this what your existence has finally come to huh…”

The white person is saying something. But I can't understand it.

“…No. Perhaps this is just the “beginning”?”

The white person is saying something. But as I thought, I really can't understand it.

The white person slowly raises something overhead.

From the eye something warm overflows out

Just what that is, I don't know.

But. I feel that the wide “Azure sky” behind the white person is really very beautiful.

In the instant something is swung down, the whole world ends.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

“And thus… this world ends. But before long, it will start again.”

From somewhere unknown, I became aware I could hear that voice.

AN EVIL SIGN

NU

The only noises that could be heard within this silent room was the hum of the machines and the footsteps of the scientists who were deep in thought. On the screen of the central main monitor, the image of a girl with numerous cables attached to her was displayed. On top of that, the cable attached directly to her right eye made her a rather unusual sight. The girl was motionless. Whether she was alive or dead… That was something that was hard to be sure about.

“The readings have stabilised”

The female voice of the operator resounded through the loudspeaker.

“Right, that's good. Increase sethir levels by 500… inject it in!”

The old man in a white lab coat sitting in front of the main monitor issued out the order.

“Roger. Injecting an additional 500 amount of sethir.”

As the operator's voice resounded,

simultaneously the noise level of the machines began to increase. After a moment, the cable attached to the girl's right eye began to undulate, and shortly became dyed black.

Instantly, like the beat of a pulse, the girl began to quiver slighty.

“Woooah!”

The surrounding scientists cheered slightly. Before reaching this stage, there had been countless failures.

“Right, all that's left is to wait for the establishment…”

“Yeah, it will take quite a while till the awakening. However, it seems we will be able to finish within schedule.”

The short and slender-built assistant seated next to the old scientist replied.

“Because this one took so long to reach us, I'm a little uneasy… The delivery is set for tomorrow at 1030 hours right?”

“Yes, it's scheduled to be delivered to the 13th Hierachical City Kagutsuchi tomorrow at 1030 hours.”

The 13th body delivered to the Hierachical city numbered 13… such an ominous combination, the assistant thought but kept it to himself.

The old scientist and his seated assistant gazed intently on the monitor with some emotion. After this all that was left was for the seithir to fully permeate, and then wait for the establishment process. Each of the scientists began to relax.

“Nevertheless, this 13th subject that we confiscated from Ikaruga… it seems it's level of completion is different than from what was declared”

“Yeah, it's something that Sector Seven made that was desgined by Dr. Relius”

“Hm, that puppeter huh? I guess I should say as expected of his work then. But still, to think that those damned Sector Seven could advance to this point…”

“They nearly stole a march on us. Nonetheless, it's too early for us to let our guard down”

“Yeah. There were 3 bodies that were built in Ikaruga. Out of those 1 was retrieved by us, the Libarium, and is now here but…”

“The whereabouts of the remainding 2 are unknown. While in the midst of recovering this subject, the Libarium's special forces ran into interference from a giant individual resembling a “demon”, and it seems another body was unfortunately stolen. The delay in the arrival of this subject is also the fault of the interference caused by the unknown individual”

“ A giant resembling a “demon” huh. I wonder who's he working for… and which other body did he steal?”

“Well, that has yet to be investigated into. Still, if it's the 12th then it's going to be a little bit troublesome…”

The 2 men frowned.

“Still, regarding the demon in Ikaruga, that's certainly some sort of fairy tale right?”

The old scientist uneasily shrugged the subject off. The other scientists laughed. The many tales of the “demons” and “monsters” in Ikaruga was widespread and was treated as common knowledge amongst them.

“Ah yeah, there's one more. There's this one case of the “grim reaper”. Have you guys heard about it?”

“You mean the one who's destroying the boundary contact mediums and cauldrons? Who or what is he?

“I don't know much. Other than the fact that he's dressed in red and has silver hair…”

The assistant disappointedly shrugged his shoulders.

“Boy oh boy, the intelligence department are rather useless aren't they…”

The old scientist replied. At that moment, a click sound indicated the door had opened.

“Ah~ sorry, am I interrupting anything? Pardon me…”

Suddenly, a voice they weren't used to hearing echoed from behind them, and the scientists turned around. Other than the half opened door, the top half of a slenderly built male suddenly popped out of the gap. He was clad in a dark suit, and held a hat in his hands. His eyes seemed to not know how to open.

“Hey, this is a restricted zone! How did you get in!?”

One of the scientists raised the alarm over the conspicious suit-clad outsider. With an innocent look on his face, the man in the suit casually slid into the room.

“I apologise for the sudden intrusion. I am Hazama from the intelligence department. So sorry, to have come while you're all in the middle of work…”

His voice dripping with sarcasm, Hazama introduced himself. It seems he had been observing their idle chatter. Whether he had heard their criticism of the intelligence department was undiscernable.

“… And what does the intelligence branch want?”

The old scientist replied with a level voice. Walking with steady and light footsteps, Hazama stood before the scientist.

“I came to retrieve the 13th subject but… I guess it'll take a little more time hm?”

“Retrieve? Isn't the 13th subject scheduled to be transported to Kagutsuchi tomorrow at 1030 hours?”

His face showing doubt, the scientist posed the question. The surrounding scientists' wariness of Hazama increased.

“Ahh~, well circumstances have changed somewhat. No actually, everything's going according to plan.”

“I do not understand what you're saying. Please explain.”

“You could call it a bluff. To decieve your enemies, first decieve your friends, as they say, right?”

As he said that, Hazama looked around at the scientists' faces. The old scientist quickly caught on.

“I see. In other words, the official order was just a diversion, huh…”

“That's right, that's right. The 13th subject is very important after all. If it were to be destroyed or stolen then, it'd be very bad wouldn't it?”

“…”

“Sector seven has already begun to move, and when they'll come here to cause disruptions is undeterminable. And also, there's…”

Hazama stopped mid-sentence. With one eye slightly opened, he continued in a low voice.

“… The situation regarding the “grim reaper” too.”

The scientists murmurred amongst themselves in low voices

“It seems you don't believe me. Then, I guess it can't be helped. Look here, this is the imperial edict”

While saying so Hazama casually drew out a what appeared to be a note written on a piece of paper from his inner pocket.

“The seal of the Imperator is present, do you see it?”

It was said with a light tone.

“No, it's fine. I understand. We will make preperations for the transport immediately. Please give us a while to make all the arrangments.”

“Ah, before that. The truth is, aside from the retrieval I was given a special order as well…”

“Special order?”

“It would be bad if there were some sort of mistake. So then, I need to confirm the number of the subject with my own 2 eyes.”

“Impossible…! How could there have been a mistake!?”

The assistant raised his voice, to insist that their work was without flaw. Hazama turned to face the outburst, his expression unchanging.

“… I understand. However, I will have to accompany you in, that won't be a problem right?”

The old scientist rebuked his subordinate, and tried his best to give a calm response to Hazama.

“No, of course it won't be”

The old scientist led Hazama along, into the depths of the research lab, and guided him into the subject's room. Attached to the binding devices, the 13th subject's body which hung from the restraints, was unmistakably alive. As Hazama approached he climbed up a stepladder, and examined the middle of the 13th subject's neck and chest.

“Ah, I see. It's unmistakably the 13th , yes.”

While tracing the number 13 engraving with his finger, Hazama smiled as he spoke.

“Are you satisfied now?”

“Yes, thanks to you”

“Then, let's hurry up and leave.”

Snapping the file shut with a bang, the old scientist pressed Hazama to leave. Then, he turned on his heels and began to walk quickly towards the door. Hazama turned and followed suit. However, on his way out he turned to face the 13th subject, and with both eyes opened began to mutter

“Yo, doll. It's about time to wake up from your dream. There'll be plenty of time to continue the rest in reality… no?”

As if in response, the 13th subject's left eyelid appeared to flutter weakly.

The alternate truth is yet to be found

[redacted]